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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 000160

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SUBJECT: AIR FORCE SECRETARY WYNNE AND MBZ DISCUSS SHARED
EARLY WARNING AND EXTREMISM

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (B)
and (D).

¶1. (S) Summary: When Secretary of the Air Force Wynne met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince (and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces) Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) February 3, MbZ focused on Shared Early Warning and communication links as critical to defend against Iran. He pressed for advance consultation on U.S. military planning. His characteristically harsh assessment of extremists led him to the conclusion that they cannot be allowed to get the upper hand in Muslim societies. Secretary Wynne was joined by CENTAF Commander Lt Gen North; MbZ was joined by Chief of Staff Lt Gen Hamad Thani and International Affairs Director Yousef al-Otaiba. End summary.

¶2. (C) Secretary Wynne opened the conversation by relaying keen interest in alternative fuels and environmental protection (having just visited an Abu Dhabi exhibit on a future "Masdar City" using alternative energy sources), to which MbZ commended efforts that set a high standard which motivates others to follow. He and Lt Gen North praised the partnership of the Air Warfare Center at Al Dhafra Air Base as a high quality training opportunity for allied air forces.

Urgent about SEW

¶3. (S) MbZ honed in on Shared Early Warning (SEW) early in the conversation, stating that this "long-standing" issue had been lingering for too many years. He said Washington seemed to anticipate the GCC coming together on a SEW architecture when in fact "in this part of the world we don't get together." He called for urgent sharing on a bilateral basis to ensure close cooperation if Iran were to provoke a conflict. He complemented SecDef's comments (in Bahrain late last year) about fixing a date and moving on with SEW among those who were ready to play ball. MbZ said he could not wait for Saudi Arabia or others to get on board; "this is my #1 security need."

¶4. (S) Showing great interest in U.S. plans to extend the life of the A-10 aircraft, MbZ said he sought platforms capable of "dropping smart weapons 24/7." He discussed communication linkages (Link 16 in particular) at some length, noting his demand of General Schwarzkopf that his pilots be linked to allied forces prior to Desert Storm. He said he could not send pilots without a link "to know what I'm shooting," reminiscing about the six UAE personnel welcomed awkwardly into a Saudi operations center with 1,000 Americans and 500 Saudis. In spite of that uncertain start,

his pilots were flying sorties northward within a few days. If Iran (he named President Ahmedinejad in particular) were to threaten, the UAE would not have the luxury of deciding whether to respond, he said, but would have to defend itself. Sometimes one must "go across the border" in self defense, he added, citing again the need to coordinate data among allies.

Seeking consultations on U.S. plans

15. (S) MbZ pressed for advance warning of U.S. intentions in the region, particularly relating to Iran. "I am not a politician," he said, but please ask "if you need anything." He agreed that he would rather be in the cockpit than in the cabin if turbulence were to hit.

Extremism will not lead this region

16. (S) Citing the dangers of extremism, MbZ philosophized that we live in an important time in history -- one in which he sees a simple equation: "Either they lead or they follow." He sought a Middle East in which issues like opening a public beach were not questioned. Tolerance and moderation should be the norm. (He was glad that at least the UAE is not still in the phase of debating whether women should drive.) MbZ declared that Islam was being hi-jacked by extremists. Reminded of the Roman Catholic Inquisition, MbZ said Islam should learn from that historical period; the West paid a high cost in blood and treasure, "how can we not learn from it?"

ABU DHABI 00000160 002 OF 002

17. (S) U.S. policy in the region is bound to face detractors in the Middle East, said MbZ, and "will be blamed" regardless. The President's January 13 speech in Abu Dhabi, for example, was chided by editorial writers for not mentioning the UAE islands occupied by Iran; criticism would have been worse if the speech had mentioned them, MbZ opined. The extremists (represented by what he sarcastically called "our favorite station" of al-Jazeera) will twist anything to suit their needs. MbZ stressed that the Islam he knows advises people not to harm anything, and even to assist a cat if it is sick or injured. He vowed not to let the extremists "kill wisdom and humanity" as taught by the Quran. "What sort of religion is that? Not mine, definitely." He vowed again that evil men (whom he referred to as subhuman) would not be permitted to "get in front and lead."
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